Amendment in Consumer Protection Act

2690. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to bring out some important amendments to the Consumer Protection Act currently in force;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that some of the amendments have been opposed by an important section of lawyers' lobby;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether these obejctions would be taken into consideration before bringing forward the amendment bill and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A bill to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 mainly aimed at facilitating quicker disposal of consumer complaints, enhancing the capability of redressal agencies, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the procedures and widening the scope of the act to make it more functional and effective was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 26th April, 2001. The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2002 has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha on 11.3.2002.

Some of the important amendments contained in the Bill are as follows:

(i) Creation of benches of the National Commission and state Commissions and holding of circuit benches;

(ii) Prescribing time-frame for admission of complaint, issue of notices and disposal of complaint;

(iii) Exclusion of services availed for commercial purposes;

(iv) Recovery of compensation amount ordered by the redressal agency through certificate case as arrears of land revenue;

(v) Provision for issue of interim orders by the redressal agencies;

(vi) Establishment of consumer protection council at district level.

(c) to (e) One of the proposals contained in the Amendment Bill as introduced in the Rajya Sabha was that the opposite party would be entitled to engage a legal practitioner only if the complainant engaged a legal practitioner or was himself a legal practitioner or had not objection to the opposite party engaging a legal practitioner.

Representations were received from sections of lawyers against such a provision in the Bill which was omitted through official amendment at the stage of consideration in the Rajya Sabha.

Purchasing power of poorest among poor

†2691. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that there are a number of such persons among very poor people who are not even able to purchase subsidised foodgrains; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) As per a National Sample Survey about 5% of the total population in the country sleep without two square meals a day. In order to make the Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) more focused and targeted towards this

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.